

National Response Options Matrix

Senior leadership's quick response card to a maritime transportation security incident.

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Since the events of September 11, 2001, tremendous resources have been expended by industry and government to prevent another terrorist attack against the U.S. and to protect critical infrastructure and key resources. In the past few years, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been formed and interagency and public/private sector partnerships have been developed to thwart terrorist and criminal activity that would threaten U.S. interests, borders, and way of life. The Coast Guard stepped forward as the lead DHS agency for maritime security and, with the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) of 2002, has made Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security (PWCS) a primary mission.

But what if a terrorist attack should occur in a major U.S. port or within the U.S. Maritime Domain? How, and where, should the Coast Guard respond? Will the response actions mitigate further attacks or will they damage the U.S. economy and erode public confidence?

Before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on September 9, 2003, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral T.H. Collins, stated: "...a terrorist incident against our Marine Transportation System would have a devastating and long-lasting impact on global shipping, international trade, and the world economy. As part of a recent port security training exercise, a maritime terrorist act was estimated to cost up to \$58 billion in economic loss to the United States."

This statement underscores the importance of immediate responses to maritime transportation security incidents (TSI), which are incidents resulting in a significant loss of life, environmental damage, transportation system disruption, or economic disruption in a particular area. This response must appropriately and proportionally address the local level, but also the national level, to keep public confidence in government high and the U.S. economy

strong. To this end, the National Response Options Matrix (NROM) was developed.

NROM Features

NROM provides senior leadership with pre-planned responses for immediate use following a maritime transportation security incident, or imminent threat of a maritime TSI, in one or more of U.S. ports, waterways, or coastal approaches. In essence, this matrix is a quick reaction card or decision aid for use by senior leadership to direct a security posture that may transcend Coast Guard Areas (Atlantic Area and Pacific Area); significantly impact the maritime industry; change the Maritime Security (MARSEC) Level; and perhaps affect or involve other DHS agencies or federal departments. For example, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has already joined the Coast Guard in development of an interagency NROM, with specific actions focused on response and recovery. NROM is also available electronically to the Coast Guard Captains of the Port to engage their Area Maritime Security Committees for planning and awareness training and to gain possible feedback for response and recovery option improvements.

The NROM goal is to provide senior Coast Guard and CBP leadership with immediate, pre-planned, short-term security options to prevent further attacks; protect the marine transportation system, maritime critical infrastructure and key assets, and high-density population centers; and recover from a TSI, through:

- changes in MARSEC Level governing security activities of Coast Guard forces and the maritime industry;
- closure or control of ports by specific port, regionally or nationally;
- expanded CBP law enforcement boardings to screen crewmembers and remove detained-on-board crewmembers for immediate repatriation;



- restriction of certain port activities and access to certain facilities or vessels;
- deployment of specialized Coast Guard or CBP security capabilities and law enforcement assets;
- an increase in vessel, crew, and cargo screening;
- denial of entry or expulsion of certain vessels, directing vessels to anchorages or safe berths;
- potential changes in Coast Guard force protection level; and/or
- identification of other agency points of contact for notification or coordination of activities on a national level, regionally, or by specific ports; may also include port-specific Area Maritime Security Committees or the maritime industry representatives on the National Maritime Security Advisory Committee (NMSAC). NMSAC is comprised of members from various sectors of the maritime industry and was established to provide advice to the Secretary of Homeland Security, through the Commandant of the Coast Guard, on matters of maritime security.

Confidence is high that, at the affected port level, the Coast Guard Captain of the Port/Federal Maritime Security Coordinator, in coordination and cooperation with CBP and other federal, state and local agencies and industry stakeholders, will respond appropriately to mitigate the effects of a maritime TSI. Additional and heightened security measures will be imposed in the specific port of attack. MTSA requires the creation and approval by the Coast Guard, exercise and updates to Area Maritime Security Plans, Port Security Assessments, and vessel and facility security plans to deter, deny, prevent, protect, and respond to maritime TSIs. Elements of these plans will be ordered into effect by the Captain of the Port.

NROM addresses the security posture needed beyond the affected port by helping senior leadership answer the question: What additional or heightened security measures need to be implemented immediately to prevent further attacks and protect the marine transportation system, maritime critical infrastructure, key assets, and high-density populated areas from follow-on attacks on a regional or national basis? These security measures may only target certain aspects of the marine transportation system, while at the same time maintaining the legitimate flow of commerce and use of the maritime environment. By having pre-planned response options, senior leadership can react quickly to immediately direct field units, industry and other governmental agencies to act appropriately and proportionately to prevent further terrorist attacks and disruption of maritime transportation.

Preplanned response options buy time. NROM security measures are immediate and short-term actions. Concurrently with NROM measures, planning teams will prepare more robust and comprehensive plans based on additional intelligence information, situational analysis,

and appropriate and available capabilities and will coordinate with other agency partners and with industry representatives via the NMSAC.

Rapid Interagency Information Sharing

The quick response to the credible threat of terrorist activity, or an actual TSI event, requires the rapid sharing of information vertically and horizontally throughout the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Homeland Security, other federal and state agencies, and the maritime community. The Coast Guard Command Center has developed an incident reporting system, Critical Incident Communications, to rapidly disseminate initial, limited information about critical incidents throughout the Coast Guard and interagency partners. Security measure decisions based on the NROM will be communicated quickly to areas, districts, field units, and, as appropriate, to the maritime industry via the Area Maritime Security Coordinator.

Both the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection have extensive authorities within the maritime environment. The Coast Guard Captain of the Port is responsible for all vessel movements, including ordering vessels to depart ports and permitting vessels to return to ports. The Coast Guard is responsible to ensure that vessels, including crew, passengers, and cargo, do not pose a threat to the United States. The Coast Guard is also responsible for the protection of maritime infrastructure.

The CBP priority mission is to prevent terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States. The CBP is responsible for the clearance of vessels, persons, and cargo arriving from foreign ports. CBP has the authority to approve the lading and unlading of cargo and the embarkation and disembarkation of crew and passengers. CBP has the authority to examine, detain, and seize cargo and penalize carriers. By partnering on the National Response Options Matrix, both agencies have created a model tool for rapid decision making and interagency security coordination to prevent attacks and protect the marine transportation system, maritime critical infrastructure and key assets, and coastal high-density populated areas.

The National Response Options Matrix is a model tool for interagency security cooperation and coordination. Perhaps other federal agencies will join the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection in this collaborative effort to rapidly thwart terrorist attacks, while preserving the flow of maritime commerce and legitimate use of the maritime environment.

***About the author:** CAPT Wayne C. Dumas is a Coast Guard Reserve officer who, for the past five years, has been on active duty in the Office of Port Security, Planning and Readiness and been an adjunct member of the G-OPD/G-MPP Homeland Planning Team. He was previously at PACAREA on the Maritime Homeland Security Planning Team. CAPT Dumas was Commanding Officer of Port Security Unit 313 and N3/N5 of Naval Coastal Warfare Unit 113. CAPT Dumas is currently assigned to G-RPE, Chief, Contingency Exercises.*